

ELSAH HISTORY

Published by Historic Elsie Foundation, P. O. Box 117, Elsie, IL 62028

No. 94

Winter 2007/08

ELSAH MEMORIES OF A PRIVILEGED YOUNG BOY

Bruce A. Pates, III

Elsah was always an exciting place for me to visit as a young boy in the 1950s and early 1960s. My grandfather, Bruce A. Pates, Sr., owned Joywood Farms, located basically at the top of the hill as you drove down into the Elsie valley. Joywood Farms consisted of the apple orchard at the top of the hill, as well as another 160-acre farm off of Salem Road near Dow. We in the family always referred to this as the "North Farm." More importantly, Grandfather also owned an old Victorian era home on top of the bluff off Palm Street.

My grandfather was a very successful businessman, and was a major player at Western Publishing in St. Louis. While Western is not a familiar name, at the time they owned Simon & Schuster, Golden Books, and Whitman, so they were pretty big. He was a self-made man, who never went to college. He started at the bottom at Western, and worked his way up to near the top.

I believe he first bought property in Elsie in the 1930s. He was an avid horseman, so the apple orchard farm also housed his many horses. There was "Rev" (really Revis Choice Allen), who was a stallion, Holly Dare, a mare, and another horse called Sonny. At one time he also owned two Tennessee Walkers, and a pony for me and my sister Dorsey.

My grandfather usually spent his weekends in Elsie, so every Saturday he would drive from St. Louis, spend the night at the bluff house, and drive back late Sunday afternoon. That was a bit of a hike in the old days before the Interstates and the River Road. My grandfather employed a few local people who I came to know during my visits. I most remember "Sarge" Viera and his wife, Louise, who lived in the house on the bluff, and took care of it as well as the farms. They were like family, and they were "uncle" and "aunt" to me, even though there was no relation. He also employed the Haney and Grady families, and I think both men were named Roy. He would also employ a lot of local folks to work in the apple orchards at harvest time. My mom always said that most of the folks worked to get extra money to get their kids fixed up for Back-To-School.

I often wondered later in life how my grandfather was viewed by the locals. While I loved him dearly, he was certainly one of the more pompous men I have ever known, and he could sometimes be a terror. He could also be extremely generous.



*Bluff House (also known as the Pates' House)
December 1967*

Photo: Bruce A. Pates, Jr.

My father, Bruce A. Pates, Jr., was a Marine Corps officer, so the family traveled all over the country from assignment to assignment. My mother, Jean Reintges Pates, also has a major Elsie connection, as her grandmother was the last Reintges to live in the Reintges house by the Post Office. [This is where the

Lukens now live, at 50 Mill Street.] My mother and father met in St. Louis, and I find it interesting that they would both up end with a connection to a very small town like Elsah. My father attended Christian Brothers College in Clayton, Missouri, which at the time was a military high school and employed retired Army Sergeant, E.C. "Sarge" Viera. That is the connection how "Uncle Sarge" came to work for my grandfather.

Most of my visits to Elsah were during extended summer vacations of several weeks, and sometimes at Christmas. I remember the trip up from St. Louis used to take a few hours, as we took Lindbergh most of the way. There was the old scary bridge across the Mississippi River at Alton. It was very narrow and had a curve in it over by the Alton side of the river. It always seemed when you hit the curve, there was a semi coming in the other direction! The River Road ended at Clifton Gardens [Clifton Terrace], so you had to go up the bluffs, and then come back down to Elsah through the valley.

Once we got to Elsah it was always a joy. My sister and I loved going over the little one-lane bridges, which my grandfather likely took a little too fast! It was sort of like a short rollercoaster! We'd always honk the horn going by Dewey McDow's house up Palm Street to the bluff house. There was also a very sharp blind 180-degree bend in the road about halfway up, so my grandfather would often let me or my sister honk the horn, just in case

somebody was coming down in the other direction!

The bluff house was always a blast. The views looking into Missouri were to die for. The house had three or four bedrooms and a bathroom upstairs, and downstairs a fairly central hallway with a living room/study off to the right, and once past the stairs/foyer, a dining room off to the left. The kitchen was at the back of the house, and a small porch off that. The front of the house had a porch that wrapped around it on two sides.



Bluff House. Circa 1950.

Photo: Bruce A. Pates, Jr.

We were trained at an early age to be very conservative with water up there, as rainwater was captured in the gutters and stored in a cistern for use.

Some years later, my grandfather built a two-car garage with a flat roof that doubled as an observation deck. There was another small storage house and a chicken coop to the right of the house as you faced the river, and another house beyond that. My grandfather owned the small storage house, and may have owned the other one, but I'm not certain. I never remember anyone being in it. There was a burned-out house to the left of the bluff house that somebody rebuilt, only to burn down again. [This is the Faerbers' home.] I never saw any other people up there besides them, and I always found it astounding that nobody else ever developed anything up there, especially with the million-dollar views. Maybe it was the lack of city water, or possibly that Principia owned more land up there than I remember.



Photo at left: Grandmother Anna O'Hare Reintges, with granddaughters Virginia Reintges (L), and Jean Reintges Pates (R) in front of the Reintges house, July 1945. Bruce A. Pates family photo

The apple orchard farm I seem to remember was about 30 acres, although it could have been a bit larger. During my youth, the Joywood Farms Road entrance didn't exist, and the road in was near current Lake Drive, close to the road to Chautauqua. Of course, the vast majority of the property was apple trees, with a few peach trees, but there was a back grazing area where there were some cattle. The main part of the farm as you drove in consisted of an apple shed, a large barn with an attached paddock area, and a small farmhouse to the right. On the left was a hay shed and an even bigger paddock area. I think the Gradys lived in the small farmhouse. There was a small grey tractor that I used to play on (not running!), and Uncle Sarge always gave us rides in his Jeep, as he went about the property.

I also got to ride the horses with my folks, and my grandfather actually went out and bought a pony for my sister and me to ride. Unfortunately, that pony was about the meanest animal God ever put on the earth, bucked like crazy with us on it, and the next time we came to the farm, it was gone!

Another great memory was the day Dewey McDow of "Dinky" fame took me down to ride a locomotive in the Illinois Terminal Railroad yards in Alton. I doubt they'd let a ten-year-old drive a diesel locomotive around these days, even with adult supervision! Because I was a total train freak, it was nirvana!

I don't remember the last time I went to the apple orchard or the bluff house, but it was likely in the mid-1960s. Sometime after that we were shocked when my grandfather sold the apple orchard to a developer, who wanted to build nice homes on the property.

After his death, his will was contested by his second wife, and the bluff house had to be sold to Principia to pay her off. Luckily, the "North Farm" is still in the family and is still a working farm today.



Bruce A. Pates, Sr. at Joywood Farms. Circa late 1940s – early 1950s.

Photo: Bruce A. Pates, Jr.

I recently made the mistake of driving through Joywood Farm, which was heartbreaking, as it is nothing my grandfather thought it would be. It is also heartbreaking to hear that the bluff house has been abandoned, and that Principia intends to tear it down. I hope somehow they can be convinced to repair it or sell it to somebody who will repair it. It would make a fabulous Bed & Breakfast or residence.

The family has no plans to sell the "North Farm," so we hope the Pates family ties to Elsie will remain for many years to come.

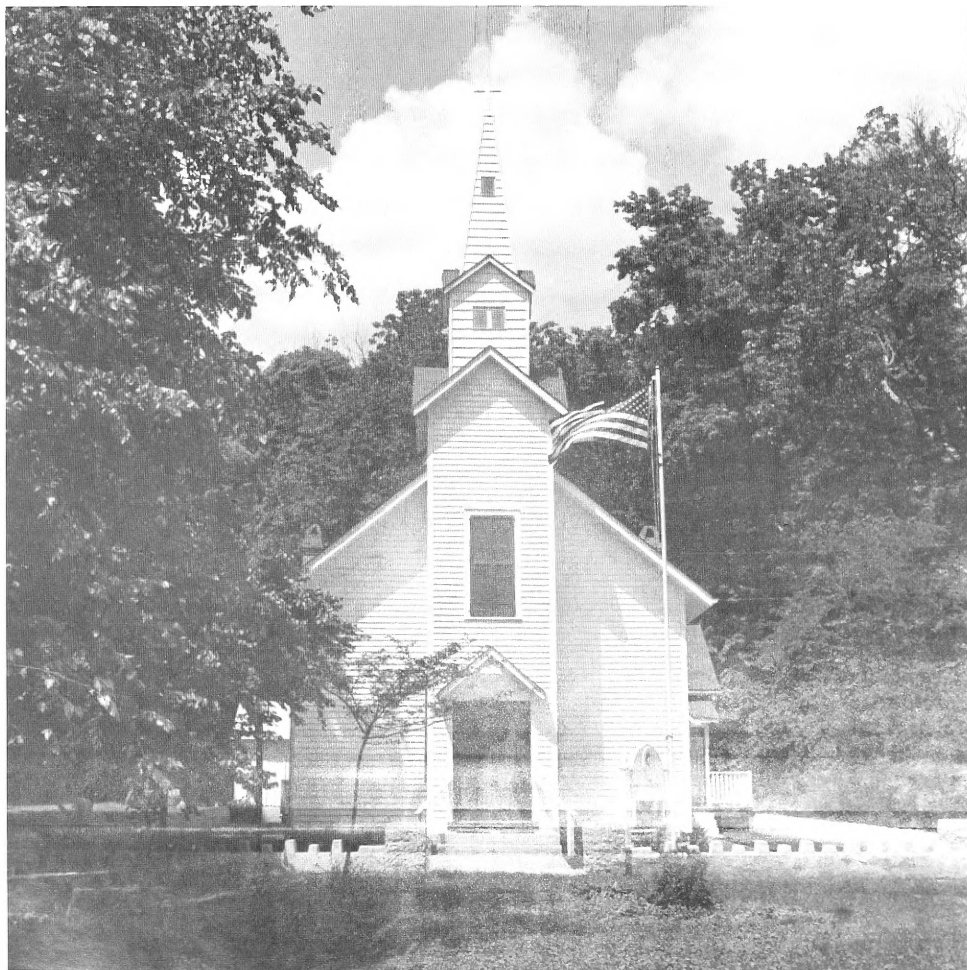


The Pates' House January 2008 Photo: Inge Mack

Editor's Note: The Pates' house was recently demolished by its current owner, Principia College. It had been slowly deteriorating over the past several years, and one wonders if the National Trust's definition "Demolition by Neglect" would apply here. Whether this demolition was justified or not is difficult to judge not knowing all the circumstances. In any case its loss saddens those who cherish local history and architecture. We wish to avoid the same fate for Eliestoun. We offer our support and assistance in working for the preservation of Eliestoun house and grounds.

Village of Elsah Museum Events...

Twenty photographers entered 43 photographs in the 2007 photo contest, sponsored annually by the village museum. The theme was "Elsah: People and Places." Ben Johnson was awarded the First Place Purchase Prize. Joan Vogel Baker received Special Recognition for whimsical quality. Gretchen Batz received Special Recognition for quality of print and strong evocative feeling. Andrea Ives received Special Recognition for composition with community spirit and feeling of Elsah.



First Place Purchase Prize winner: Silver gelatin photo of Elsah's historic Methodist Church by Ben Johnson of St. Louis, Missouri. Excellent quality of the silver gelatin print, traditional photographic reproduction, along with the classic composition, the juxtaposition of the unfurled flag and church steeple that leads to a beautiful cloud formation made this photograph the stand out winner.

Special Recognition for a whimsical quality

Garden Party
Photographer Joan Vogel Baker

*Joan lives in Moro, Illinois
This is a photograph of an Elsay garden
(2 Alma Street)*



*Special Recognition for quality of print
and strong evocative feeling*

Sacred Workplace
Photographer Gretchen Batz

*Gretchen is a long-time resident of
Elsah and a well-known local
photographer*

*This is a photograph of Henry Turner's
office at Eliestown*



*Special Recognition for composition with
community spirit and feeling of Elsay.*

Farley's Basket Dance
Photographer Andrea Ives

Andrea is a 2007 graduate of Principia College.

*This photograph was taken during one of the
monthly folk dances held in
Farley's Music Hall*



Report to Members and Friends

Our list of donors to Farley's Endowment Fund keeps growing and we are grateful. Since the fund was opened in May 2006, several donors have given more than once, and several donors have given from \$500 to \$5,000. These dedicated supporters are recognized with this symbol (*) on the accompanying list)

To date members and friends have donated a total of \$23,250. Thank you! Our goal remains at \$125,000. We hope you will consider continuing your support of this worthy cause.

Lynn Adams
Helen H. Andrews
Ann and Mark Badasch
W. Tuthill Bayley
Cynthia Beavers
Edith Belote
Linda Bohaker
Paula and Ned Bradley *
Lenore and Donald Campbell
Amy Cloud
Sue Colleser
June and Bob Cronin
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Greatriverroad.com
Marjorie and Henry Hamlin
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James Hostler
Margaret and Andrew Hyde*
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Marie Jureit and Family*
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Judy and Deane Leonard*
Ute Levi
Jeri and Ed Lewitz*
Phyllis Bayley Lockwood*
Julia N. Marshall
Christine and Tim Morris
Enid Stidd Narver
Marie and Ole Oleson*
Lorraine and Warren Passmore
Jane and David Pfeifer*
Nolan and George Provenzano
Thomas Russell*
Mary Anne and Jim Schmidt
Jane and Dan Schmit
Ann Barnes Simpson*
Gloria Snyder
Helen Sprague and Family*
Carol Stookey*
Mary Talcott
Kathryn and Matt Thompson
Rose and Tim Tomlinson*
Alma Tripidi*
Valerie and Mark Tucker
Terri and John Viner
Marian Wells*
Nancy Wiley
Missy and John Williams

We have been awarded a \$2,000 Preservation Heritage grant from Landmarks Illinois (formerly Landmarks Preservation Council of Illinois) to be used for exterior repairs of Farley's Music Hall.

Historic Elsah Foundation was required to match the \$2,000 grant, and the \$3,000 income received from the 2007 "Home for the Holidays" home tour more than met that need. Work on the building will begin this spring. Rotting wood will be replaced by Jeff Edgar, and Jason Roloff will give the exterior a new coat of paint. Both of these men have excellent reputations. We look forward to seeing Farley's refreshed and ready for the next decade of its long life.

The 2007 "Home for the Holidays" was a great success and drew a good sized crowd. Our Christmas Shoppe was in the museum and sold a wide assortment of "gently used" Christmas decorations that had been donated by members and friends.

HEF's Activities Committee is already planning for the next "Home for the Holidays" home tour. It will be on Saturday, December 6, 2008.

Last October our Membership Committee reviewed our membership structure and recommended changes to our Board of Directors. The Board voted to accept the changes. The Life Membership was eliminated with current Life Members being "grandfathered" into the current structure.

The 2008 membership categories are as follows: Patron \$25 to \$99; Supporter \$100 to \$249; Founders' Circle \$250 and above; James Semple Business Associate \$100. The James Semple Business Associate membership is designed to enlist annual support from the local and regional business and professional community. Our first member in this category is greatriverroad.com. We hope to develop this category into an important revenue source.

Every December our annual Christmas Sing, hosted by Elsah's two churches and Historic Elsah Foundation is always a happy holiday event and is always well attended. Many thanks to Paula Bradley and Inge Mack for organizing the reception sponsored by HEF in Farley's Music Hall.

And, sincere thanks to you, our members and friends, for your dedication and support of HEF. It is much appreciated.

Marie Oleson, president

*more than one contribution or a contribution from \$500 to \$5,000

Village Happenings...

The big happening in Elsah since the report in our last newsletter was the annual Home for the Holidays home tour on December 1, 2007.

Historic Elsah Foundation and the Elsah Business Association send a heartfelt...

Thank you...

...to all who contributed to the success of this year's Home for the Holidays house tour and Christmas Shoppe.

...to business sponsors: **greatriverroad.com, Green Tree Inn, My Just Desserts, and Principia College.**

... to Individual sponsors: **Tim & Joy Booth, Stan & Ellen Hanold, Steve & Cindy Ira, Ed & Jeralyn Lewitz, Inge Mack, Ole & Marie Oleson, David & Jane Pfeifer, and Bob & Sara Rockabrand,** and one donor who wishes to remain anonymous.

...to homeowners, churches, and businesses who opened their doors and welcomed visitors: **Jim & Noreen Bayer, Sunny Smith-Foret, Ute Levi, Bob & Christy Phillips, Mike & Pauline Pitchford, Blair & Dory Smith, Tim & Deborah Smith, Elsah's United Methodist Church (and the bell choir), the Christian Science Church, Maple Leaf Cottages, Green Tree Inn, and the Corner Nest.**

...to **Steve Ira** for being Santa Claus, to **Cathy Barlow** for being Mrs. Claus, and to **Mark Badasch** (in his handsome top hat) for being the tour guide on the horse-drawn carriage.

...to those who served on the planning committee: **Ann Badasch, Cathy Barlow, Paula Bradley, Marge Doerr, Cindy Ira, Marie Oleson, Christy Phillips, Pauline Pitchford, Gerry Rock, Lynn Schreiber, and Susan Young.**

Receipts for the day totaled \$3,000.

Sponsorships paid all expenses which means every penny will go into the fund to restore and paint the exterior of Farley's Music Hall.

We are also grateful for an added bonus as our \$3,000 in receipts easily matched a...

\$2,000 grant awarded by Landmarks Illinois

to Historic Elsah Foundation for the Farley's restoration project.



Cathy Barlow and Steve Ira as Mr. & Mrs. Claus

Upcoming Activities in the Village of Elsah...

Game night — pot luck supper, \$1.00/person;
Second Saturday of each month. Check Post Office
bulletin board each month for current information.
6:00 p.m. Civic Center

Folk dances — All are welcome, \$5/person;
\$15 max per family, student half-price with ID;
Third Saturday of each month, except June, July,
August, and December.
7:00 p.m. Farley's Music Hall

Museum — Opens Saturday, April 1 and will be
open every Friday, Saturday, and Sunday through
October 26. Free admission.
1:00 to 4:00 p.m. Village Hall

Connecting Threads — for rug hookers, quilters,
knitters and fiber artists. Bring your favorite
project and share an evening of fun and fiber.
March 20, April 17, May 15.
6:00 to 8:00 p.m. My Just Desserts Elsah

Quilt Retreat — Wagon Wheel quilt with no "Y"
seams taught by Barb Marfell. March 26, 27, 28.
Reservations: 374-1607 Civic Center

Crazy Quilts — Hallye Bone, an AQS certified
appraiser will lecture on the Victorian "Crazy Quilt"
Friday, March 28. Lunch and program \$20.00.
Reservations: 374-1607 Farley's Music Hall

Rug Hooking — This is an open class with Kathy
Meentermeyer. May 14, 15.
Reservations: 374-1607 Civic Center

Welcome...

...to Dawn and Eric Gray and son Aeneas — 75 Mill Street
...to Tom Phillips and Tuan Nguyen — 86 Mill Street
...to Dorothy (Dodie) Douglas — 122A Cemetery Road

and Farewell...

...to John and Barbara Fritsche 75 Mill Street
...to Kerry and Mike McElya — 122A Cemetery Road

Welcome to new members of HEF: Amy Cloud, Janet Copley, Christine and Cody Favilla,
Deborah and Tim Smith.

**Welcome to our new business and professional category,
the James Semple Business Associate:** greatriverroad.com

Historic Elsah Foundation Board:

President	Marie Oleson
Vice President	Paula Bradley
Secretary	Tim Tomlinson
Treasurer	Jane Pfeifer
Board members:	
Ann Badasch	Mary Anne Schmidt
Cathy Barlow	Jeanne Shultz
Steve Ira	Gerald Tactz
Jeralyn Lewitz	Susan Young
Inge Mack	

Board Member Emerita: Marie Cresswell

ISSN 1552-9002

Elsah History is published by Historic Elsah Foundation.
Subscription is with membership. Editor: Marie Oleson
Memberships for 2008:

Patron \$25 to \$99
Supporter \$100 to \$249
Founders' Circle \$250 and above
James Semple Business Associate \$100

Please send memberships or letters to the editor to:
P.O. Box 117, Elsah, IL 62028

The purposes of Historic Elsah Foundation are stated in the Articles of Incorporation (1971):

"...the preservation and enhancement of the historic buildings, houses, architecture and culture of the Village of Elsah, Illinois, the historic areas, the publication of historical brochures, pamphlets, and periodicals regarding the Village, and the establishment of an educational program to inform the general public of the historical and educational value of the Village."